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THE STORY OF  
STAFFORD HOUSE

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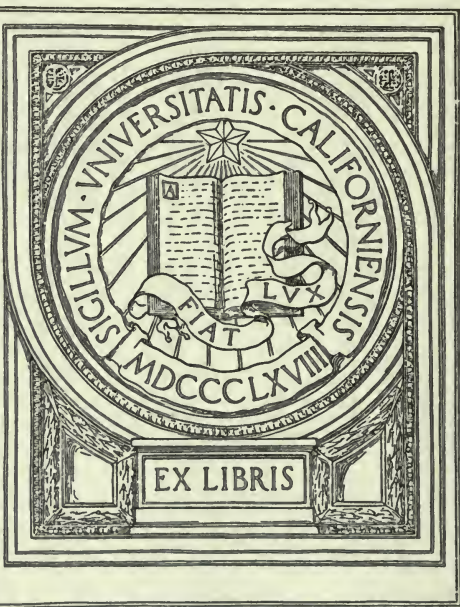
BY

ARTHUR IRWIN DASENT

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HARRIET ELIZABETH GEORGIANA HOWARD,  
DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND

*From a portrait by F. Winterhalter.*

*Frontispiece*

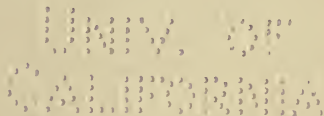
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# THE STORY OF STAFFORD HOUSE

NOW  
THE LONDON MUSEUM

BY ARTHUR IRWIN DASENT

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



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# THE STORY OF STAFFORD HOUSE

EVERY intelligent Londoner knows, at any rate externally, St. James's Palace—the titular authority of the English Court for centuries past, though no longer the actual residence of the Sovereign.

It would be difficult to name offhand a more familiar architectural feature in all the length and breadth of London than the well-proportioned entrance gateway and clock tower facing St. James's Street.

It is, moreover, the only genuine piece of Tudor brickwork in the West End and, as such, deserves the most careful attention at the hands of its custodians.

But the origin and successive ownership of some half a dozen private houses clustering round this ancient home of royalty, of which Stafford House is by far the most important, not being so generally known, some at least of the thousands of annual visitors to this—the

Cinderella of London museums—may be interested to have a more detailed account than has yet been written of the history and associations of the great ducal mansion in which the Museum, after a modest beginning at Kensington Palace, is now permanently installed.

A private residence on this site has existed for over two hundred years, and many of its former occupiers have left an indelible mark upon the page of history.

Its origin, however, is so closely bound up with the Palace, of which it forms an integral part, that no apology will be needed for including in these pages a brief account of that ancient royal residence and the still older charitable institution which it replaced.

In Norman times the actual site of the Palace, including the ground upon which the London Museum stands to-day, formed part of the vast possessions of the great Benedictine Monastery of St. Peter on the Isle of Thorns, better known to most of us as Westminster Abbey.

Here stood for centuries a lazar house for poor women, under the jurisdiction of the Abbot of Westminster.

Stow tells us that there were to be main-

tained fourteen sisters, "maidens that were leprous, living chastely and honestly in divine service." It is uncertain when this hospital was first erected, but as one of the abbots rebuilt it in the middle of the thirteenth century, it is fair to assume that the original structure was at least a century older. For a long series of years it stood alone, remote from other dwelling places, in the green fields which formed a portion of the rich agricultural lands surrounding the abbot's manor house known as La Neyte.

This house stood not far from the Thames in what is now vaguely called Pimlico, and was constantly used by the abbots as a summer retreat. These hospitals for lepers were invariably placed on the outskirts of cities from the dread of contagion inspired by the ravages of that foul disease. In many an old English town may still be found a mediæval church dedicated to St. Giles, the patron saint of lepers, not in a central situation, but immediately without the city walls.

St. Giles' at Oxford is a case in point, and there are other instances, too numerous to specify here, scattered up and down the length and breadth of England.

In 1290 Edward I. granted a fair, to be held annually on the eve of St. James's Day, the profits of which were to be devoted to the maintenance and upkeep of the hospital. This fair was ultimately suppressed as a public nuisance after the pious intention of its founder had ceased to have any meaning. It was, however, revived in Brook Fields, to the northward of Piccadilly, and re-christened May Fair until the growth of building in that now fashionable quarter brought about its final abolition.

Henry VI., of pious memory, granted the perpetual custody of the hospital to his beloved college of Eton, but Henry VIII., in his greed to destroy the church, dispossessed the poor lepers (though one is glad to learn that they were granted pensions for the term of their natural lives), pulled down the lazar house, and built in its stead what a contemporary chronicler describes as a "magnificent and goodly house." There is nothing very spacious or magnificent about the Palace now, but it should be borne in mind that a large portion of the eastern end was destroyed by fire in 1809.

Foreigners visiting London for the first time are apt to consider the Palace as it stands to-day unworthy of the prestige and



authority of the Court of St. James, nor, for the matter of that, can a dingy brick house in the *cul-de-sac* which is all that remains of Downing Street—the very hub and centre of the governance of the British Empire—strike them as a suitable place of abode for the Prime Minister of England. There was another reason why Henry VIII. desired to despoil the hospital and acquire its lands. There never was very much garden ground attached to Whitehall, where the principal buildings were so close to the river that there was no room for pleasure grounds, except the Privy Garden, which was of no great extent.

Having drained the marshy land lying immediately to the south of the hospital, Henry VIII. formed St. James's Park, and enclosed it with a substantial brick wall, portions of which remained until well on in the eighteenth century.

This royal pleasaunce was formerly of much greater extent than at the present day. What we now know as the Green Park was long included in it, there being no public thoroughfare or roadway through the Mall until much later. It was in this upper portion of the park that the deer were chiefly to be found, and we

have it on record that two young cavaliers, my Lords Castlehaven and Arran, "did alone run down and kill a stout buck" here, before the king, for a wager, in 1664.

Neither Henry VIII. nor Edward VI. habitually lived at St. James's, but Queen Mary died in the Palace. Elizabeth and James I. rarely visited it, but Charles I. often lived in it, both as king and captive. Here most of his children were born, and from it he walked bravely through the park to his death on the scaffold at Whitehall.

Charles II. and James II. preferred Whitehall to St. James's as a place of residence, but William and Mary were compelled to occupy the latter, after the destruction of the greater part of Whitehall Palace by fire, until such time as they could remove to the more salubrious atmosphere of Kensington.

Queen Anne, who was born in St. James's, held her Court here, as did George I. George II. divided his time between it and Kensington.

George III., the last of the Hanoverian kings to reside at St. James's, struck out a new line by acquiring Buckingham House (now Buckingham Palace) from the Sheffield family.

Both George IV. and his next brother, the Duke of York and Albany, were, however, born at St. James's, and in after years the latter returned to the precincts of the Palace, and projected the great building with which these pages are principally concerned.

In the Middle Ages not only dukes, with whom we have principally to deal in this necessarily rapid review, but the majority of the higher nobility of England lived for the most part within the City walls for the sake of security.

One of the last of these City mansions was Shaftesbury House in Aldersgate Street, which escaped destruction until quite recent times. In the seventeenth century the town spread rapidly westward, and even before the Great Fire of London the aristocracy had practically deserted the City as a place of residence, though isolated instances to the contrary remained here and there east of Temple Bar.

Early in the reign of Charles the Second, whence we may date the dawn of modern England, a more comfortable style of living than had been possible within the confines of a dwelling-house which partook to some extent of the nature of a fortress, came into vogue

The Duke of Norfolk, who had lived at the Charterhouse in the sixteenth century, now fixed his town house in the Strand in close proximity to their graces of Somerset, Beaufort, Buckingham, and Northumberland.

All their mansions had ample gardens sloping to the Thames for the convenience of access by water.

Not only is the Duke of Buckingham commemorated to this day by streets, insignificant in themselves, perpetuating his family name and title, but the stately watergate, now high and dry in the Embankment Gardens, remains to show what was once the principal approach to his long-vanished mansion.

Two centuries ago, and until considerably later, the river was the principal highway of London, and hundreds of watermen plied daily for hire between old London Bridge—the only connecting-link with the Surrey side until Westminster Bridge was opened in 1750—and Whitehall and Westminster, and so far up stream as Chelsea, Fulham, and Richmond.

Previous to the building of the stone bridge at Westminster, there were, it should be remembered, several so-called bridges on the river, such as Ivy Bridge, Strand Bridge, and



Essex Bridge, but these were only wooden piers or landing-places, and not bridges in the modern sense of the word. The Archbishops of Canterbury habitually came from Lambeth to their Parliamentary duties by water. Archbishop Wake, who died in 1737, was the last to do so, but the fourth and last Lord Gwydyr, who died as recently as 1909, aged nearly one hundred, remembered being rowed from Whitehall in his grandfather's barge to see George the Fourth crowned in the Abbey.

Charles the Second, when in residence at Whitehall, used the river whenever he could, frequently making royal progresses to the City in his gilded state barge, and many men of lesser degree "took oars" at the various piers, as a matter of course, whether on business or pleasure bent. With the advent of the eighteenth century the growing movement of the town, both westward and northward, made still further strides, and the river traffic experienced a corresponding decline.

The final blow to the Thames watermen, however, was the embanking of the river in the last century. This made it impossible for them to moor their boats in safety, or to haul them up on the shore, whilst the same cause contri-

buted to put an end to the Westminster schoolboys' rowing, although, within the memory of some still living, they met and defeated Eton on the water.

At the close of the seventeenth century and early in the eighteenth, strawberry leaves became as plentiful as blackberries in St. James's. Marlborough House, only a stone's throw from the London Museum, was built for the hero of Blenheim by Sir Christopher Wren.

The Dukes of Devonshire, who were burnt out of Montagu House, on the site of the British Museum, in 1686, now exchanged Bloomsbury for Piccadilly, where they replaced the Lords Berkeley of Stratton.

The first Duke of Ormond, a grandee of the first class amongst his peers, with a wealth of minor titular distinctions hanging to his name, whilst he kept up a princely establishment in Ireland, now made his London home in St. James's Square.

The second Duke, hardly less distinguished than the first holder of that proud title, also lived there until his disgrace in 1715. A victim of Whig vengeance, he lived on in exile for twenty-five years, his estates being confiscated, his family honours extinguished, and a price set upon his head.

Ormond House, after being inhabited for a time by the "princely" Chandos, was demolished in 1735, but it is still possible to realize its former extent from the fact that three separate houses, all of considerable size, now occupy its site.\*

The Dukes of Norfolk deserted Arundel House on the river bank for the West End when Henry Jermyn, Earl of St. Albans, the founder of St. James's Square, succeeded in drawing a number of the cavalier aristocracy to his new "piazza" in St. James's Fields, the freehold of which he obtained from the Crown in 1665.

Charles the Second, who was largely responsible for the growth of the new buildings in this quarter of the town, was born in St. James's Palace in 1630, when, as the astrologers duly noted, the star of Venus, appropriately enough, as the sequel was to show, was in the ascendant.

He lived, as everyone knows, for the most part at Whitehall, but he retained an affection for the place of his birth, and greatly increased the amenities of that ancient home of royalty.

\* Nos. 9, 10, and 11 of the present numbering of the square.

Fond of exercising his dogs and feeding his ducks in the adjoining park, he could also hold his own with the best players of the game from which Pall Mall derives its name.

Before Marlborough House was built the gardens attached to St. James's Palace were of much greater extent, reaching as they did eastward as far as Prince Rupert's house at the Spring Gardens end of the Mall.

Here of a summer evening Charles would frequently be found, with the gentlemen and ladies of his court, playing at bowls; and where, formerly, the poor leprous maidens had dragged out a miserable existence, fashion and frailty, the gallant and the gay, now sauntered and simpered in the scented gardens of St. James's.

In winter-time the King and his brother, the Duke of York (afterwards James the Second), skated and slid on the ornamental canal, which Charles had ingeniously constructed out of a number of small and unconnected ponds.

Some of the finer trees which fringe its margin are undoubtedly as old as the Restoration, and are believed to have been planted by the celebrated French landscape gardener, Le Nôtre, under the King's personal direction.



The pelicans and other exotic birds, which are a perennial source of delight to London children at the present day, are the lineal descendants of the "strange wild fowle" which the ubiquitous Pepys noted in his immortal "Diary."

Here were also to be seen deer of various kinds and hues, an elk, goats from Guinea, and sheep from Arabia. The thirsty visitor could procure a glass of red cow's milk fresh from the pail near the Spring Gardens, until the descendants of the original cowkeepers were evicted by an unsympathetic Government Department a few years ago. Another attraction which the Mall had for Charles the Second was the facility which it afforded him to chat with Nell Gwynne over the garden wall of her house in Pall Mall Street, now No. 79, and the West End office of the Eagle Insurance Company. At first this "brittle beauty that nature made so frail," was offered a lease for life of the premises, but Nell insisted that nothing but a freehold conveyance under the Crown would satisfy her requirements, and, in the end, she had her way.

All the houses thereabouts had small gardens at the back, but they abutted not on the Mall

itself, but on that part of the then extensive royal gardens on which Marlborough House was subsequently built. This is clearly shown in one of Ogilby's admirable maps of the West End published about 1680, although the point has been overlooked by many previous writers on this portion of London.

The house has been rebuilt at least twice since Nell Gwynne lived in it, but her three cellars under the pavement of Pall Mall, considered to be among the best examples of curved brick arches in London, remain to this day.\*

Only a hundred yards or so farther west Nell's hated rival, Barbara, Duchess of Cleveland, was installed, within easy quarrelling distance, at what is now Bridgewater House.

Yet another royal favourite was quartered in St. James's Square. This was Moll Davis,

\* Other occupiers of No. 79 were Dame Denise Hart, widow of Sir William Hart; Sir Peter Leicester; Maria, Countess of Waldegrave; Dr. Heberden, the friend and medical adviser of Samuel Johnson, and his son; Sir Thomas Dyke Acland; the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, from 1836 to 1866, when the Eagle Insurance Company bought the property. The tradition that the house was at one time the residence of Mrs. FitzHerbert appears not to rest upon any sure foundation.

a young actress and dancer upon whom the King showered favours.

Her portrait by Lely, or if not from his brush, from his studio, now in the National Portrait Gallery, shows her to have been possessed of somewhat insipid features, and no doubt she lacked Nell's sparkle and vivacity of speech and manner.

Her rendering of the old English song "My Lodging is on the Cold Ground" is said to have been the immediate cause of her sudden promotion to royal favour.

Her antics on the stage made the pulse of that inveterate playgoer, Samuel Pepys, beat quicker as he sat in the pit of Old Drury, marking time with his foot as he applauded the measure. Naïve and flippant on the boards, what she lacked in beauty she made up for in agility. Her subsequent career is not clearly ascertained, but her daughter by the King married the second Earl of Derwentwater, and became the mother of the Jacobite lord beheaded on Tower Hill.

With the advent of the short and ill-starred reign of James the Second, we reach tangible proof of the erection of the first private dwelling-house on the actual site of the London Museum.

In the year of his accession to the throne the King granted a lease of the land, of course filched from the park, on which the house was subsequently built, to Lady Oglethorpe.\* This lease was dated December 6, 1685, for a term of thirty-one years from the preceding Michaelmas, at a yearly rent of only ten shillings! Who, it may be asked, was Lady Oglethorpe, and how did she come to acquire such a preferential site on such ridiculously easy terms?

The answer appears to be that she was the wife of Brigadier-General Sir Theophilus Oglethorpe, who fought for James at Sedgemoor. He was Colonel of the Buffs, but after the King's flight he was deprived of his regiment, the Colonelcy of which was given to Marlborough's brother, General Charles Churchill. In 1692 a warrant was issued against him as a Jacobite, and he retired discreetly to France. But in the following year he took the oaths to King William and sat in Parliament for the little borough of Haslemere until his death in 1702. His wife was Miss

\* The site had previously been occupied by a laundry-house, and the premises granted by the Crown extended 200 feet from north to south and 135 feet from east to west.



Eleanor Wall, of a Tipperary family of which not very much is known or can now be recovered from the dusty archives of the past.

Swift, who may have known her in Ireland, describes her, in his " Journal to Stella," as a " cunning devil " more than once.

A pamphlet issued in 1707, without printer's name or address, purporting to be the personal recollections of a serving-woman (one Mistress Frances Shaftoe), alleged that it was an infant son of Lady Oglethorpe's who was substituted for the real Prince of Wales, known to future generations as the Old Pretender. The contention was that the real Prince died a few hours after his birth, and that another child had been introduced into the Palace in a warming-pan.

This theory does not seem to have been put forward at the time by any of the believers in the " warming-pan " story, of whom Bishop Burnet was the principal.

But it is a coincidence, if nothing more, that the belief so widely held that the child which the Queen had given birth to died within a few hours, and that another infant was surreptitiously introduced into the Palace, and passed off as the rightful heir to the throne, should coincide with the undoubted fact that

Lady Oglethorpe's house was in close proximity to the royal apartments (only a narrow lane divided it from the Queen's rooms on the site of what is now Clarence House), and that she had several children before and after the year 1688.

One Simon Burgiss, a firm believer in the "warming-pan" theory, published in 1689 an account of the plot, with a plan purporting to show how the child was smuggled into the Palace, but he can have known nothing of Lady Oglethorpe's supposed share in the mystery, as his diagram indicates that the substituted child was brought in at the eastern or Pall Mall end of the Palace.

Little or nothing is known of Lady Oglethorpe after Swift's various allusions to her. She did not, I think, remain long in St. James's after the incident recorded above, as in 1691 the lease of the house was renewed by William III. to Robert Sutton, second Lord Lexington, for a term of ninety-nine years. Lady Oglethorpe survived her husband until 1732, having had seven or eight children in all.

There now began a much longer and more creditable connection with the house, for before the close of William the Third's reign it came into the occupation of the Godolphin family, in

which it was destined to remain for over a hundred years.\*

Godolphin House, as Lady Oglethorpe's former abode now came to be called, has been known to later generations as York House, Stafford House, and, more recently, as Lancaster House.

It is almost the last, if not the very last, of the greater ducal residences once so numerous in the metropolis—standing, not in streets or squares, but detached from other buildings, thus affording ample elbow-room to their owners. Sidney, first Earl of Godolphin, the man whom Charles the Second said was “never in the way and never out of the way,” was, a Tory by birth and inheritance, compelled by an inexorable fate to act with his political rivals. No wonder, therefore, that he weakened into Whiggism by slow and all but imperceptible stages. The natural bent of his inclinations was more towards sport than politics, yet he was on several occasions, and in three successive reigns, placed at the head of the Treasury Board.

\* Sidney, Earl of Godolphin, expended a large sum previous to 1701 in improving the house, with the leave and approbation of the King.

Queen Anne, the fourth sovereign under whom he served, made him, in 1702, Lord High Treasurer of England, but, acting as he did in close co-operation with Marlborough, his position was gradually undermined by Harley, Shrewsbury, and other self-seeking ministers.

In 1710 he fell from power, and died two years later, a comparatively poor man. His wife, Miss Margaret Blagge, a young lady of great beauty, was held to be the most virtuous of all Queen Catherine of Braganza's maids-of-honour. Though naturally of a retiring disposition, she once consented to appear in a masque at court as Diana, the goddess of chastity, covered from head to foot with diamonds of the estimated value of £20,000.

Her son Francis, second Earl of Godolphin, succeeded his father in 1712, and lived in the family mansion in the Stable Yard until his death, at the age of eighty-seven, in 1766. He was not a man of any great attainments, though he filled several minor court appointments before becoming Lord Privy Seal under King George the Second. He is said to have read only two books in his lifetime. One was Burnet's "History of His Own 'Time,'" and



the other Colley Cibber's "Apology," and when he had read them through he began them over again.

At his death the earldom became extinct, but a barony which he also held reverted by a special remainder to his cousin Francis. This title too became extinct in 1785.

The last Lady Godolphin lived on at the family house until the beginning of the nineteenth century, and was succeeded there by the ninth Duke of Bedford—the first of his family to desert Bloomsbury for nearly two hundred years.

Called away from England to assume the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland, he allowed Charles James Fox, the foremost exponent of English Liberal opinion in the eighteenth century, then nearing his end, to occupy a suite of rooms in Godolphin House during his absence; but Fox soon removed from St. James's to Chiswick, where he died on September 13, 1806.

His body was brought back to Godolphin House, prior to interment in the Abbey, but the funeral did not take place until October 10, nearly a month after the date of his death!

His last words, said to have been addressed

to his wife: "I die happy, but I pity you," hardly strike so lofty a note as Pitt's: "My country, how I love my country!" but there are other versions of that great Englishman's last-recorded utterance not quite so heroic in conception.

Few public men have had so many town habitations as Fox.

When first returned to Parliament in 1768, he lodged with his father,\* at Holland House, Piccadilly, on the site of the Albany.

In 1772 he went to St. James's Street, to which "celebrated eminence," to use the apt words of Disraeli, he remained constant for about thirty years, with occasional compulsory divergences to Jermyn Street, to Piccadilly, where he lodged with his friend Fitzpatrick over Mackie's oil and pickle shop, in the block between Duke Street and St. James's Street.

All of these were handy, not only to Brooks', but to the minor gambling hells which then abounded thereabouts. One of the most notorious of these was in Pickering Place, a quiet little backwater at the lower end of St. James's Street on the east side, the existence of which is scarcely known to the average

\* The first Lord Holland.

passer-by, so inconspicuous is its approach from the main street.

In 1781, when his pecuniary embarrassments were more than usually acute, Fox's household effects in St. James's Street were seized by one of his many creditors, and Horace Walpole mentions his having seen a cart at his door removing copper pots and pans and old chests of drawers.

The news of his having had a temporary success at the faro table had spread like wild-fire, but had his bank swelled to the size of the Bank of England it could hardly have yielded a sop for each. Whilst the removal was in progress Fox looked on quite unconcerned, and, apparently, not in the least distressed at the forcible abduction of his goods and chattels. His house in St. James's Street was close to Boodle's Club, and in it he used to point out to his friends a room which he humorously termed his "Jerusalem Chamber," where he was accustomed to interview insistent callers.

Even his library was sold under an execution about this same time, and a property at Kingsgate in the Isle of Thanet which his father bequeathed to him was eventually sold to another creditor.

It is said that the extravagances of his two sons, Stephen and Charles, cost their father at least £200,000, and that in one year, 1773, the debts of Charles alone amounted to quite half that sum.

After 1790 Fox went to 34, South Street, Park Lane, thence to Thomas's Hotel in Berkeley Square, then to Clarges Street, and next to 9, Arlington Street, his last independent home in London before he found asylum at Godolphin House.

The next to occupy the old house in the Stable Yard after the Duke of Bedford was Frederick Duke of York and Albany, the second son of George the Third, who, as we have shown, had been born in the Palace.\* Handsome, good-mannered, and generous, he fought a duel on Wimbledon Common, in 1789, with Colonel Lennox, afterwards fourth Duke of Richmond, coolly receiving his opponent's ineffective fire, and then discharging his own pistol into the air. His refusal to decline the challenge, or to avail himself of his rank, was much applauded at the time, and the Duke, already popular in society, became from that

\* The Duke of York is first met with at Godolphin House in 1807.



time forward a public favourite. He was made Commander-in-Chief in 1798, in which capacity, though he was by no means a military genius, he was liked by both officers and men, striving continually, as he did, to improve the lot of the common soldier. Though he derived from the state an income of about £70,000 a year, his expenditure was always in excess of his means, and, as years went on, his affairs became more and more embarrassed.

On the accession of George the Fourth he became heir-apparent to the throne, and, in view of his altered circumstances, he appears to have considered himself insufficiently housed.

He therefore pulled down old Godolphin House, in the spring of 1825, with the intention of building a much larger house on the site. Having first enlisted the services of Robert Smirke, then in the heyday of his fame, the plans were ultimately entrusted to Benjamin Wyatt, one of a family of rather mediocre architects whom his brother employed extensively at Windsor and elsewhere.\*

It is said, though I have not been able to

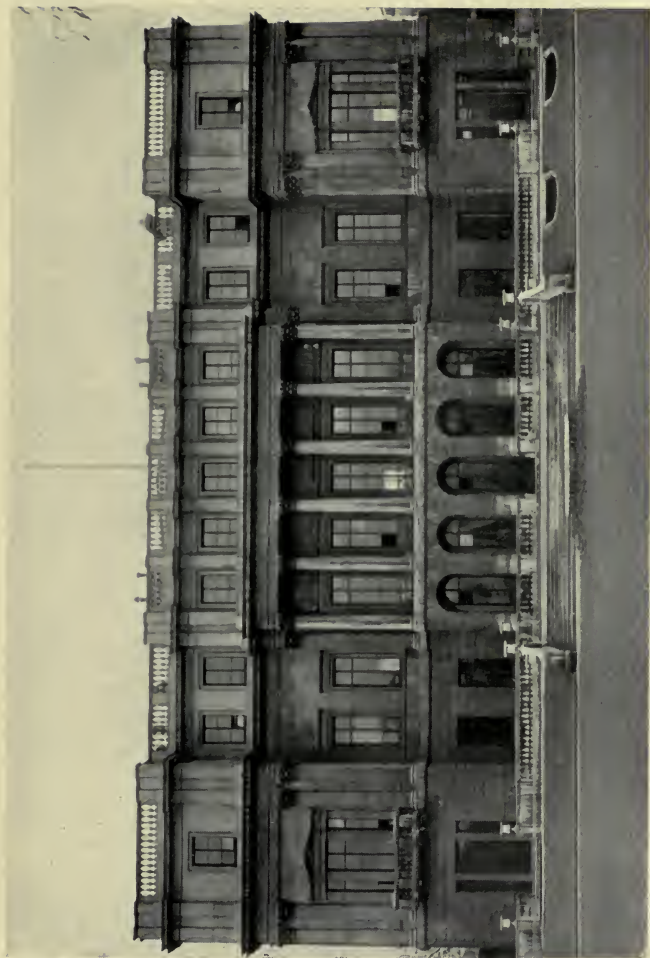
\* "The demolition of York House, St. James's, is almost completed, the house is nearly levelled with the surrounding garden," said *The Times* on May 16, 1825.

verify the statement, that the Duke induced the then Marquis of Stafford (created Duke of Sutherland in 1833) to advance the whole of the estimated cost of the new mansion, just as a few years earlier he had persuaded Thomas Coutts, the banker, of the Strand, to lend him a large sum of money on the Albany, when he exchanged houses with Lord Melbourne.

Only two years later the Duke died, not indeed at York House—for that he was destined never to occupy—but at the Duke of Rutland's in Arlington Street. Thence his body was removed to lie in state in Queen Anne's, or the yellow, drawing-room of the Palace, previous to burial, with full military honours, in Westminster Abbey.

Though he died deeply in debt, a monument, the cost of which was defrayed entirely by public subscription, was set up to his memory in 1833 at the top of the steps leading from the Mall to Waterloo Place.

A correspondent of *The Times* was unkind enough to suggest that the names of his creditors should be inscribed on the base of the column; another captious critic declaring that his statue must have been placed sky high so as to be out of their reach.



STAFFORD HOUSE, GARDEN FRONT



Few public monuments are so unheeded at the present day as this one, and no inscription informs the passer-by whom it is intended to commemorate.

After the Duke of York's death the new and unfinished house became a veritable white elephant to the Government. No one wanted it, and it was at one time the intention of the advisers of the Crown to lease it to the Royal Society or any public institution in search of a permanent abode.

Ultimately it was acquired by the Leveson-Gower family, whose connection with the property was destined to be second only in duration to that of the Godolphins. The Gowers of Stittenham, in Yorkshire, where they were established at least as early as the reign of Edward III., were always a lucky family, constantly absorbing heiresses and marrying the fairest in the land, generation after generation. At the close of the seventeenth century their wealth was appreciably increased by marriage with the heiress of Leveson, of Trentham, in the county of Stafford, and even more so in 1785 by the alliance of Viscount Trentham, second Marquis of Stafford and first Duke of Sutherland, with Elizabeth, daughter and sole



heiress of William, eighteenth Earl of Sutherland. This lady, known to her contemporaries as the "Duchess-Countess," was Countess of Sutherland in her own right, with the royal blood of Scotland in her veins and a pedigree dating back to the thirteenth century.

At a bound the Leveson-Gowers became the first family in Great Britain in respect of acreage, and within the first half-dozen as regards income. In 1803 the first Duke further inherited from his maternal uncle, the last Duke of Bridgewater, who died unmarried, a large portion of the Egerton family estates, including old Bridgewater House, on the site of the existing palatial structure in Cleveland Row, and a gallery of pictures by the first masters, valued at £150,000, with remainder to his nephew's second son, Francis, created Earl of Ellesmere in 1846.

As a young man the Duke of Bridgewater had been engaged to the beautiful Elizabeth Gunning (after the death of her first husband, the Duke of Hamilton), but the match was broken off owing to his insisting on her discarding the society of her sister, Lady Coventry.



This remarkable man, the first to undertake the colossal task of connecting Manchester by canal with Liverpool and the sea, so taxed his resources that he was reduced for a time to living on £500 a year, and even then he had the greatest difficulty in paying his workmen. This canal was bought, it may be added, by the Manchester Ship Canal Company about thirty years ago for £1,710,000.

The first Duke of Sutherland, "a leviathan of wealth," greatly improved his Highland estates, and not before improvement was required, for it is on record that in 1812 there was not a single road in all the county of Sutherland, and only one bridge. The north of Scotland was then all but inaccessible to travellers, the roads between Elgin, Nairn, and Inverness being in a deplorable state, whilst beyond Inverness there were none at all. When the Duke died in 1833 there were nearly 500 miles of capital roads in Sutherland, and no less than 134 bridges spanned its rivers, including one of iron, cast in Shrewsbury, with a width of 150 feet.

He purchased the Crown lease of the unfinished York House for £72,000, and gave it to his eldest son, Lord Gower, as he then was,

with an estate of £25,000 a year to keep it up with.

The latter called in Sir Charles Barry to revise Wyatt's plans, to add the upper storey and attics, and to complete the interior fittings and decorations.

The second Duke and his Duchess (Harriet, daughter of the sixth Earl of Carlisle and one of the most beautiful women of her generation) lived at old Bridgewater House until 1834, when the great house in the Stable Yard was sufficiently advanced to admit of their removing to it from Cleveland Row.

The poet Rogers likened it to a fairy palace with Duchess Harriet as its good fairy; Lord Malmesbury, Charles Greville, and other contemporary chroniclers, vied with one another in praising it. Lord Beaconsfield, a frequent guest at Stafford House in his later years, alluded to it in "Lothair" as Crécy House, "one of the half-dozen stately structures that our capital boasts of," but, in the easy manner in which he was accustomed to blend fact and fiction, he was misled into supposing that Firenzi's copies of Paolo Veronese's masterpieces with which the walls of the entrance hall are panelled commemorate the martial

exploits of the Black Prince ! Its sombre brown exterior, especially when viewed from the eastern side, left entirely plain by the architect, conveys no idea of the richness of the interior. The great hall, which is 120 feet high from floor to ceiling, will always be considered the principal feature of the house, and, in spite of many obvious defects, it was a never-failing source of gratification to mid-Victorian eyes. The standard of taste has, however, greatly changed since 1841, when it was at last finished, and, on closer and more critical examination, it has been found in many respects disappointing apart from its great height and accuracy of proportion. The staircase, which the late Lord Ronald Gower declared to be "matchless," is not of marble, as at Dorchester House, but of ordinary stone. The caryatides which support the entablatures are not of bronze but of wood painted to resemble metal. The walls are lined throughout with scagliola (relieved at intervals with white marble), whilst the pillars at the principal entrance are hollow columns of iron encased with the same material. A quarter of a million is said to have been expended on the house from first to last !

Whether Wyatt or Barry was mainly responsible for the house as it stands it matters not this distance of time. Probably each had a share in the design, and though the public taste has progressed far since 1841, the finished work is entitled to rank amongst the architectural achievements of the nineteenth century, marking as it does an honest attempt to produce for a great ducal magnate a mansion in the ornate style of Louis XIV., which, whilst suitable for entertaining on the largest scale, should be at the same time an English home.

Many good judges prefer Bridgewater House, on which Sir Charles Barry, working with a free hand and unhampered by having to adopt in part the plans of others, is seen at his very best.

In this, his masterpiece in the realm of domestic architecture, he enlarged upon and improved the idea so admirably carried out in the Reform Club, of an Italian palazzo in which the central hall, often left open to the sky in the country of its origin, is roofed in, thus enabling the beauty of the surrounding arcades to be seen to the best possible advantage. The following letter, written by the



second Duke of Sutherland to his mother, "the Duchess-Countess," on July 6, 1835, describes the first of many great social gatherings at Stafford House. It included a theatrical performance, and a concert at which Grisi, Malibran, Lablache, and Tamburini sang.

"The music was excellent and said to do better than at the opera, and the company behaved well. It lasted late, and we did not get to bed till nearer four than three. I had a sit-down table in my room\* for the Duchess of Cambridge; the others ate on their legs. The cold suppers were very good, desserts looking well and luxuriant, the rooms well lighted as well as the hall, and no crowd or confusion. Trentham (then aged six, afterwards third Duke of Sutherland), went about very independently, at one time sitting by Lord Hill in the side gallery and not going to bed till the end of the first act.

"Harriet looked very well, and was thought to do the honours in a distinguished manner. I wish you could have been here. We had sofas reserved for Carlisles, Lady Pembroke, and Clanwilliam, the children (Mrs. Granville

\* Probably the green library on the ground floor on the western side, little if at all altered since.

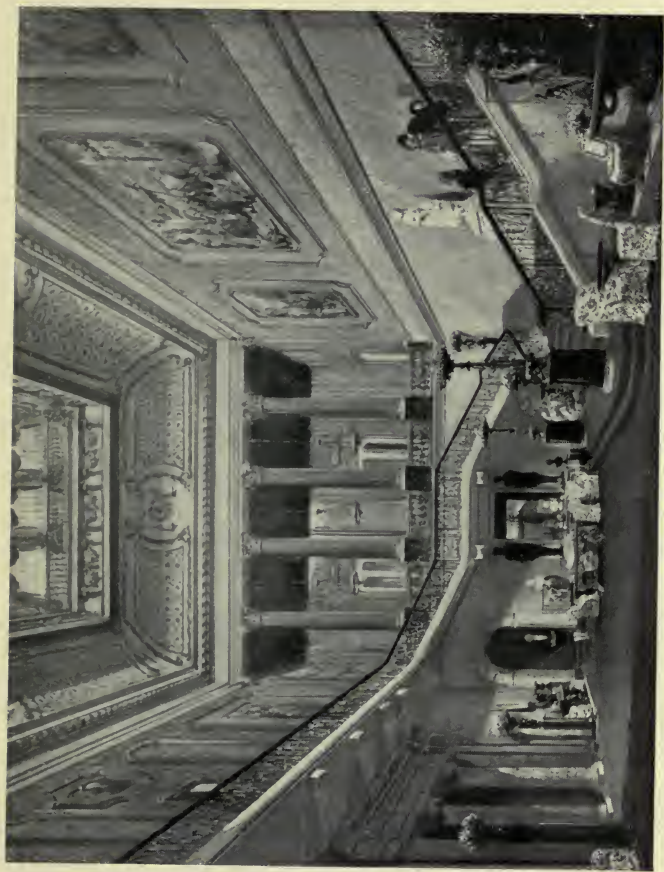
Vernon as an infirm invalid), in the western gallery near Harriet's rooms. Harriet took Lord Grey to supper between the acts and the Duke of Wellington after the concert, and we showed her rooms afterwards to the Duchess of Cambridge and the Duke of Wellington. In the middle of the first act the Dowager Lady Salisbury was promenaded up the stairs on Grunow's arm. The foreigners were all struck with the scene generally. We had put looking-glasses to the openings to the staircase in the corridors, which have a very good effect both by day and night. The gas-lighting from the outside of the lantern did beautifully for the upper part of the staircase."

In 1841 the great glass entrance-doors leading into the centre of the hall\* were flung open to admit the young Queen Victoria, and it became a tradition in the family that these were never again to be opened except for royalty or for a departing daughter of the house on the occasion of her marriage.

It is said that the Queen remarked to her Mistress of the Robes and the Duke, on first

\* These have been removed since the house was converted into a museum.





STAFFORD HOUSE, INTERIOR



entering the hall: "I have come from my house to your palace"!

No account of Stafford House would be complete which omitted to mention the prestige which it acquired in the cause of charity and freedom under the régime of the second Duke and his successor in the title.

The catalogue of illustrious guests whom they welcomed in the Victorian era includes Poerio and his fellow sufferers, still weak from their confinement in Neapolitan gaols; Garibaldi, the "deliverer" of modern Italy; clad in his famous red shirt; Livingstone; Charles Sumner; the philanthropic Lord Shaftesbury, advocating the cause of the white, and Garrison, the abolitionist, that of the black slave!

When in April, 1864, Garibaldi arrived in London as the honoured guest of the Duke of Sutherland, he met with what was perhaps the most remarkable public reception ever accorded to a foreigner in this country.

As he drove through the crowded streets, amidst the spontaneous enthusiasm of thousands who had constituted themselves an impromptu bodyguard, the carriage in which he was seated rocked and swayed like a boat in a

sea of human beings, until it seemed as if the shouting multitude would not suffer their idol to be taken from them.

When at last the hero of Aspromonte drove under the portico of Stafford House in the Duke's own carriage, he was half carried into the building, the outer wave of humanity cheering and struggling to force an entrance with such persistence that only with the utmost difficulty could the great mahogany doors be closed and the onrush stopped.

Garibaldi found repose within the great hall, and, after being formally introduced to the several members of the family, was conducted to the rooms set apart for him on the ground floor looking towards Clarence House, the same, I believe, as were occupied in after years by the present Lord Chaplin. The next day, April 12, he was taken down to Chiswick, when the Dowager Duchess received him and a large number of specially invited friends.

On being presented to Gladstone, Garibaldi exclaimed, as he grasped his hand, "Précurseur!" but it is not known what reply he received.

The same night an immense dinner-party was given in his honour at Stafford House. It

consisted, for the most part, of the greater Liberal families in London, the Palmerstons, Russells, Gladstones, Argylls, and Shaftesburys. Lord and Lady Derby and Lord and Lady Malmesbury were amongst the few Conservatives invited, as was also John Delane, the celebrated editor of *The Times*, who can hardly be said to have belonged to any party, though the weight of his influence in public affairs was habitually cast in favour of progress rather than of reaction.

Lady Shaftesbury told Lord Malmesbury after dinner that he had fallen into a trap, and that the political party to which he belonged would be disgusted at his having gone to it. To which he replied, with ready diplomacy, that he felt very much obliged to whoever had laid the trap, as he should have been extremely sorry not to have seen Garibaldi.

“After dinner the Dowager Duchess,” says the same Minister in his entertaining Memoirs, “walked off with him to her boudoir, where he smoked.\* This created great astonishment and amusement, as this boudoir, which is fitted up most magnificently with hangings of velvet

\* The Dowager Duchess’s boudoir was the room at the south-west angle of the house on the first floor.



and everything that is most costly, has been considered such a sacred spot that few favoured mortals have ever been admitted into its precincts ; and to allow anyone to smoke in it is most astonishing to all who know the Duchess."\*

The house was thronged after dinner by a crowd of guests as eager to see the General as had been the mob in the streets. This was the last occasion upon which Duchess Harriet appeared at an evening party, owing to failing health, and she divided with Garibaldi the homage and interest of her friends. In 1868 she died in her son's house, in the same room wherein, by a strange coincidence, Duchess Anne, the first wife of the third Duke, and also Mistress of the Robes to Queen Victoria, died twenty years later.

The Queen at once (November 27, 1888) paid a visit to the darkened house of mourning, accompanied by the Empress Frederick (herself a recent widow) and Lady Churchill.

\* "Memoirs of an ex-Minister," April 13, 1864. Delane also mentions this dinner-party in his diary, but does not allude to the incident recorded above, though he adds the interesting information that Queen Victoria was not particularly pleased with the attention shown to Garibaldi by her Mistress of the Robes.



Lord Ronald Gower, in his "Records and Reminiscences," relates that the Queen brought with her a cross of the purest white lilies to be laid on the coffin of her Mistress of the Robes.

As she entered the death-chamber she turned and exclaimed in a voice half-choked with grief: "But she looks as if she would speak!"

The royal party, on returning downstairs to the green library,\* remained for about twenty minutes, both the Queen and the Empress speaking sympathetically to the bereaved family and expressing their appreciation of the Duchess's unfaltering loyalty to the Queen and her children.

Within four months the Duke married again, and dying in 1892, was succeeded by his eldest surviving son, the fourth Duke.

Returning to the year 1864, Garibaldi stayed for ten days at Stafford House. He rose every morning at five o'clock, and soon after six friends and callers began to arrive. So great was their number that he held an informal levee every day, signing numerous papers and receiving many more, listening to endless questions and suggestions, and having invita-

\* Now the Board-Room of the London Museum.

tions of every sort and description thrust upon him, during which he would walk up and down the room like a caged lion in search of a means of escape.

One morning he was besieged by artists anxious to take his portrait (the importunate press photographer was then, happily, unknown), but he could not be induced to sit to any of them.

An exception was eventually made in favour of Watts at the Dowager's express request.

So anxious was she that the great artist should not be disappointed that, after one or two previous failures, she extracted a promise from the General that he would be ready to sit to him on the following day.

At seven o'clock in the morning she went to the dining-room expecting to find Watts there, but he was nowhere to be seen. Garibaldi was, however, on the spot, according to promise, beside a trio of artists, either of whom might have been Watts for all he knew, hard at work with easel and palette. "Mais," exclaimed the Duchess, "*je ne vois pas mon artiste!*" To which the General replied: "Mais, madame, il me semble qu'il y en a trois ici."

Soon afterwards, to her great relief, Watts arrived and made up a quartette, but history does not relate what became of the three other likenesses obtained by stealth.

On Garibaldi's departure from England he was conveyed back to Caprera in the Duke's own yacht.

The above are but a few of numerous incidents in the social history of the house, showing the predominant position which the Leveson-Gower family occupied in the great world of London in the middle of the nineteenth century, without any of its members attaining to Cabinet rank, or indeed to any post in the Government of their day. Their influence, in fact, was consistently social rather than political. On the other hand, no less than three of the six Duchesses of Sutherland have been Mistresses of the Robes.\*

The splendid hospitality and unbounded resources of Stafford House were never, perhaps, better exemplified than at a fête and full-dress ball given here on June 19, 1873, in honour of the Shah of Persia. At first that semi-civilized monarch intended to bring over with him three

\* This is probably a record for any one family, seeing that the dukedom is not yet a century old.

of his wives, but was persuaded to send them back, though he insisted on bringing in his train a number of his favourites, who were even less desirable.

The great staircase and hall were decorated with flowers, ferns, and palms, and the supper-tables with the choicest orchids brought specially from Trentham. The band of the Grenadier Guards was posted near the foot of the staircase, whilst a string band played dance music in the picture gallery. There was also, what was then a novelty in London, a Hungarian band which had played before the Prince of Wales at Pesth. The principal feature of their entrancing playing was that it was entirely by ear, and, though they could not read printed music, they kept most admirable time.

The Shah, bedizened with jewels, ascended the staircase with the Princess of Wales upon his arm. So interested was he in watching the dancers that he remained in the gallery for more than an hour, and did not leave until long after midnight, the military band playing the Persian National Anthem on his departure for Buckingham Palace.

The "King of kings" and "Lord of lords,"



as he was called by his slavish *entourage*, was as ungracious and uncouth in his manners as the Czar Peter the Great had been on his visit to England two centuries earlier. Like most Eastern potentates of his generation, a curious blend of barbarism, dirt, and semi-civilization, trivial things impressed him the most. He preferred the tuning-up of the orchestra at Covent Garden to the harmonised music of the opera which followed. He went into ecstasies at seeing Englishmen play at bowls, and thought that a cock-fight would be superior to any athletic sport or test of human endurance. He was more pleased with the fireworks at the Crystal Palace than the glories of Westminster Abbey or Windsor Castle. When taken to see the House of Lords he pronounced it an excrescence, and as for the House of Commons, he could see nothing in it but a menace to the Crown. He declined to go to the races because he said that he was well aware, in his own country, that one horse could run faster than another. Nor did he altogether approve of members of the English aristocracy dancing in evening dress, giving it as his opinion that it would be much better if hired dancers were commanded to take their place!



The story of his asking the Prince of Wales whether when he came to the throne he would not be well advised to behead the host who had just entertained him so magnificently at Stafford House and at Trentham (from which he visited Liverpool, Manchester, and Crewe) is absolutely true, as is the Prince's answer that, as there were so many nobles in England just as powerful, there was nothing to be gained by adopting so drastic a course.

Motley, the distinguished historian, describes a luncheon-party at Stafford House at which he was present in 1858, when he was United States Minister in London.

"On Friday I called at Stafford House. The Duchess was at home, and after I had been there a little while invited me to go to luncheon. This is, in fact, a 2.30 dinner as you know, consisting of soup, boiled and roast, pastry and fruit, like any other dinner, and is an institution at first devised to keep the strong in awe, for who has the strength to eat two dinners in one day? Of course there was no company, and I only came to make a morning call. There was the Duke, Lady Stafford and Lady Blantyre.

"After the refecton the Duchess showed me

all over the house. Descriptions of houses are not much. Suffice it to say that this is the best private palace in London. The double staircase especially is very broad and stately, and the wide entrance hall is ornamented with fine groups of statuary by modern sculptors—nothing very remarkable, but very good as furniture. I think there are few of the palaces in Genoa with so fine an entrance and staircase. The rooms are all very grand and gilded, the ‘enervating saloons,’ to get an invitation to which Roebuck complains of the baseness perpetrated by Members of Parliament, and the gallery is very handsome. I was disappointed in the pictures. With the exception of two Murillos from the Soult collection, ‘Abraham Entertaining the Angels,’ and ‘The Return of the Prodigal Son,’ both of which are treated with a dramatic energy unusual with Murillo, and with his richest and strongest colour—with these two signal exceptions there are hardly any first-rate pictures.”\*

After the death of the third Duchess there was but little entertaining on a grand scale at Stafford House, until the fifth Duchess (Lady

\* Correspondence of J. L. Motley, vol. i., p. 282.

Millicent St. Clair Erskine) revived its former glories. Her *salons*, her diplomatic gatherings, the receptions and balls given under her auspices, including the Coronation Ball in honour of the accession of King George V., were a transient and brilliant climax to the story of this house of splendid memories. The lease of Stafford House from the Crown to the Duke of Sutherland, for ninety-nine years from July 5, 1841, having been acquired by Lord Leverhulme, it was assigned by him on November 14, 1913, for the remainder of the term, to the Trustees of the London Museum for the housing of the collections which, based on the model of the *Carnavalet*, form one of the principal attractions of the capital of the Empire.



MILLICENT, DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND

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# CROMWELL HOUSE HIGHGATE

## Its History and Associations

BY PHILIP NORMAN, LL.D., F.S.A.

**C**ROMWELL HOUSE is a fine old Jacobean house on Highgate Hill, overlooking Waterlow Park. It is now used as a convalescent home for the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, and this scholarly and attractively illustrated monograph is published in aid of the funds of that Institution.

Mr. Norman establishes that the house was built (probably early in the seventeenth century) by the Springwell family, and not, as was popularly supposed, by Oliver Cromwell. Though damaged by fire in 1865, it was carefully and judiciously restored, and preserves to a large extent its original appearance.

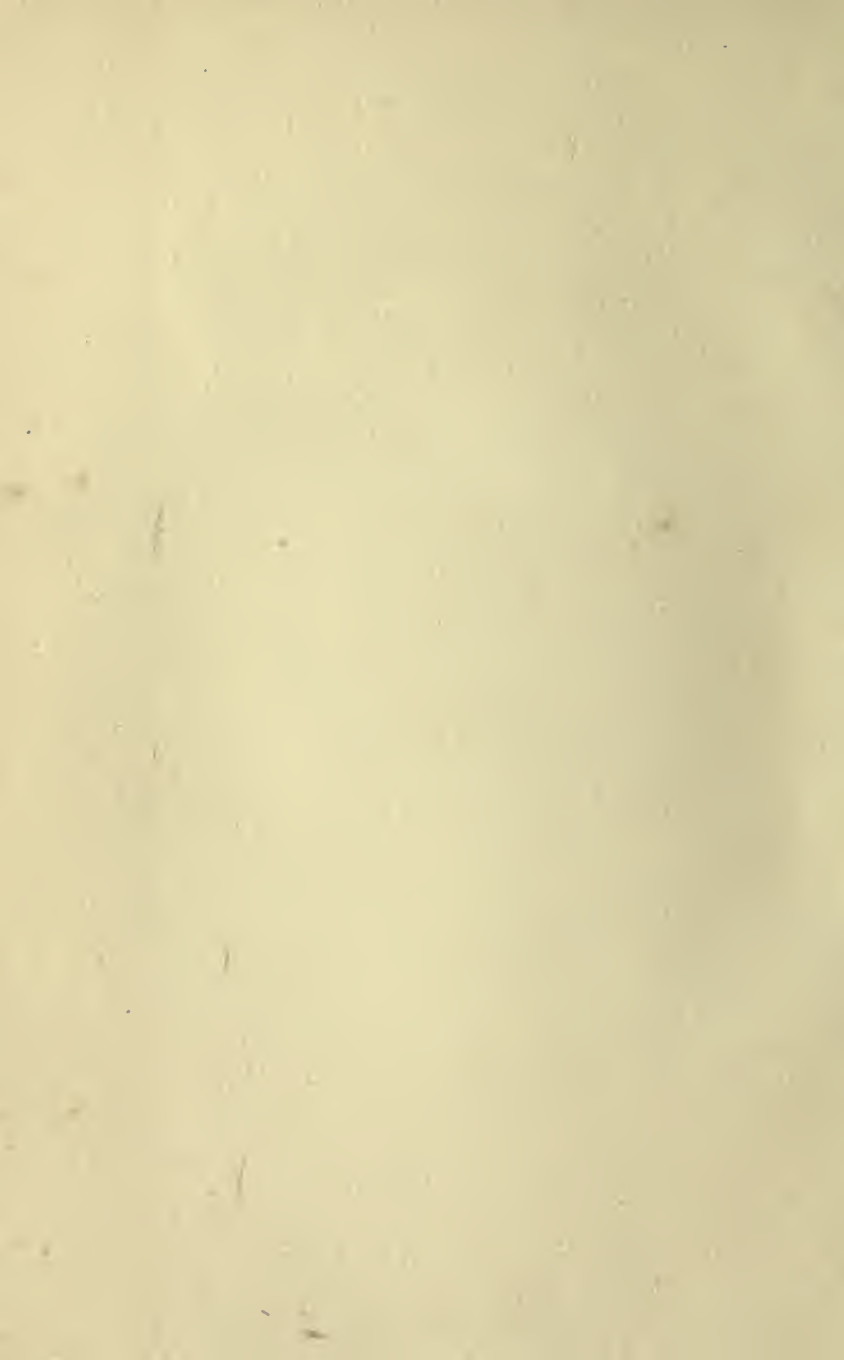
The chief, but by no means the only, feature of interest is the elaborately carved staircase, running from basement to attic. Rooms finely panelled in oak and other woods, some belonging to the Jacobean style and others of a later period, ornate ceilings, handsomely moulded doors and doorways, and elaborate mantelpieces, constitute further attractions.

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